

Message Text

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ACTION COA-02

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7045

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EFIS, KS

SUBJECT: PLANS FOR KOREAN TANNER CRAB FISHERY IN NORTHEAST
PACIFIC AND BERING SEA.

1. MOFA DIRECTOR BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMICS CHOE, HO CHUNG HANDED EMBOFF AIDE MEMOIRE MARCH 29 STATING INTENTION OF KOREA MARINE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (KMIDC) TO LAUNCH TANNER CRAB FISHERY IN NORTHEAST PACIFIC AND EASTERN BERING SEA. FLEET WILL CONSIST ONTKMIDC' S SEVEN THOUSAND TON MOTHER SHIP (WHICH HAS LAIN IDLE SINCE ITS ACQUISITION NEARLY TWO YEARS AGO), ELEVEN CATCHER BOATS AND TWO REFRIGERATED CARRIERS. FISHING WILL BE DONE WITH POTS. AIDE MEMOIRE EMPHASIZES FLEET WILL TAKE CARE TO AVOID FISHING GEAR CONFLICTS.

2. EMBOFF NOTED POLITICAL SENSITIVITY OF CRAB FISHERY AND EXPRESSED VIEW KOREAN PLANS WILL ENCOUNTER STRONG OPPOSITION FROM ALASKAN CRABBING INTERESTS. CHOE REPLIED THAT KOREA HAS AS MUCH RIGHT TO TANNER CRAB QUOTA AS USSR AND JAPAN. IN RESPONSE TO EMBOFF VIEW THAT LATTER QUOTAS BASED ON TRADITIONAL FISHING ACTIVITY, CHOE SAID THIS ARGUMENT IS UNCONVINCING SINCE RUSSIAN JAPANESE QUOTA ARRANGEMENTS ONLY RECENTLY BEGUN.

3. ACCORDING TO KMIDC MANAGING DIRECTOR LEE, KEE JUN, COMPANY HOPES TO BEGIN OPERATION IN EARLY APRIL. HE ESTIMATES THAT SEASON
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WILL FROM FROM FEB 15 TO OCT 1 5 AND ANNUAL GROSS CATCH WILL BE 9,250,000 CRABS (9,250 MT). THEY WILL BE QUICK FROZEN ABOARD MOTHER SHIP AND SOLD IN JAPAN WHERE CURRENT PRICE FOR SHELLLED CRAB IS \$1,000 PER TON.

4. EVEN THOUGH AIDE MEMOIRE IS IN FORM OF FLAT STATEMENT OF INTENTION, EMBASSY BELIEVES KOREANS WILL NOT BEGIN TAKING CRAB WITHOUT PRIOR USG CONSENT. HOWEVER, KMIDC HAS ALREADY SPENT SOME MONEY TO REFIT MOTHER SHIP AND CORPORATION'S PROSPECTIVE NEW OWNER SHIM, SANG, JOON WILL BE MOST ANXIOUS TO UTILIZE IT. THEREFORE, ASSUMING PROJECT IS POLITICALLY UNACCEPTABLE USG'S

RESPONSE SHOULD BE QUICK AND UNEQUIVOCAL.
HABIB

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*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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